

# Francis Baily Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109831
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	288505
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nicola Davies

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	527
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Jessop
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Houghton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Skillman Drive Thatcham RG19 4GG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 862188
<b>Fax number</b>	01635 860599

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large primary school set in a residential area of Thatcham. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average, as is the overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need and at school action plus is above average.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In the children's prospectus, pupils write that Francis Baily is 'a kind, friendly school where you will have fun as you learn'. This popular school lives up to this promise and provides a good education with many areas of strength. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They learn to understand and value difference and diversity in the safe environment of the school alongside staff who are 'always there to help'. In turn, pupils make a good contribution to the school and the community and are well-equipped for secondary school and for their future lives.

The stimulating Foundation Stage means children enter the school eager to learn. Pupils achieve well throughout the school and the standards which they reach are consistently above average. Added to this, pupils are extremely well cared for and supported. Each individual's progress and well-being is tracked very carefully. Knowledgeable teaching and support staff collaborate well to meet their needs. As a result, pupils with different strengths and difficulties work together happily, enjoy their time at school and do well.

In the five years since the previous inspection, the school has successfully emerged from a period of change and challenge. One of the changes was the enrolment of a number of pupils with more complex learning needs. This prompted the school to re-think the way it supports pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is now excellent. The school has rightly identified that pupils who are particularly able, gifted or talented could achieve at a faster rate if curriculum opportunities and guidance matched the quality of those provided for pupils with more difficulties.

One of the challenges the school has successfully addressed is to accelerate the progress of pupils in Years 3 to 6, as this was inconsistent and sometimes not as good as it should be. Governors, senior staff and teachers responded to this very quickly and effectively. One successful strategy was to involve all staff in the careful tracking and analysis of the progress of pupils in their groups, classes and teams. Whilst not yet completely consistent, the variations in progress have been significantly reduced and the impact of good teaching is beginning to be seen in improvements to pupils' performance in national tests. This strategy has also been useful in helping all staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons. This has been successful, but pupils do not always have enough opportunities to learn independently. This means that, on occasions, pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all lessons.

The school's success in identifying and promptly addressing its weaker areas as well as celebrating and sharing its many strengths, is an indicator of the outstanding quality of leadership and management. Difficulties have been honestly confronted and staff at all levels have worked together to address these successfully. As a result, leadership and management across the school has gained in strength and depth. This provides the school with an excellent platform to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage classes with knowledge and skills that are similar to those expected of four-year-olds. A small minority have less well developed language and communication skills even though nearly all have had some experience of education outside of the home. The welcoming environment and enthusiastic staff mean they settle quickly into

daily routines and make good progress. Recent changes to the Foundation Stage have helped children to become independent and to take responsibility for what and how they learn. Many activities are initiated by the children themselves, moving from room to room. A typical session will include learning about how things work in the exploration area and expressing their ideas in different ways in the creative and language areas. All children have independent access to learning outdoors although staff have identified the outdoor area as their next 'project'. The stimulating environment and very successful team approach leads to highly motivated children who enjoy learning, and to happy parents. 'Excellent communication, a happy environment and we are amazed by what our child has already learned,' was typical of their comments.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by ensuring that pupils have consistent opportunities to learn independently.
- Ensure that the curriculum is adapted better to meet the needs of more able pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Within the overall picture of above average standards and good achievement, the school has recognised that there has been some inconsistent progress in the past. The progress that pupils in Years 3 to 6 make has been too variable, particularly in writing and mathematics. The school has taken effective action to remedy this through the better use of tracking information. This has led to improvements. For example, progress in mathematics last year was more consistent and pupils achieved higher standards in the 2007 national tests as a result. Most pupils across the school made good progress in writing last year but this was not fully reflected in the results of Year 6 tests in English. There is room for improvement in promoting pupils' accuracy, spelling and sentence structure. The effective and very well resourced support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities means they make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy school a good deal, describing it as fun and exciting. This is reflected in their very good attendance and punctuality. They behave well and are polite and considerate with adults and other children. This good behaviour helps them to learn and is encouraged well by school staff. For example, recent work on social and emotional aspects of learning means pupils work and play in groups very well together. Pupils are proud of their contribution to the school, for example, as play partners or school councillors. They enjoy the opportunities they have to develop leadership skills and to make decisions when choosing whether to spend the funds they raise on a gazebo or on more games for other pupils. The school council has successfully encouraged more pupils to walk to school, reflecting another important aspect of pupils' very good understanding of healthy living. Other examples include their enthusiasm for physical exercise and commitment to healthy eating.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as they learn to understand and value difference and diversity. They feel very safe because of 'the security around the school' and the approachability of staff. They make a good contribution to the wider community, for example, through activities with a local home for the elderly. Pupils develop skills and qualities which equip them well for secondary school and for their future lives. The school plans to extend their enterprise skills further through work with a local business.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy learning and respond well to each other as a result of the good teaching they experience. Teachers plan well for the needs of different pupils, both in their ability sets in English, mathematics and science and in their groups. Support staff make a very good contribution to the progress and self-esteem of pupils with learning difficulties, prompting and encouraging with helpful comments so that all participate fully in lessons. Teachers guide pupils on how to improve through regular and informative marking. Pupils enjoy being challenged to think for themselves. For example, Year 3 pupils particularly enjoyed identifying conducting and insulating materials in their daily lives. Similarly, children in the Foundation Stage regularly 'plan, do and review' their own learning. As yet, not all lessons provide pupils with such good opportunities to work independently so this is an inconsistency in the teaching across the school.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The broad curriculum provides pupils with good creative opportunities in art, music, and drama alongside well taught basic skills and pupils make good progress as a result. Changes to the Foundation Stage curriculum have very successfully encouraged the youngest children to take a lead in their own learning. In the rest of the school there is more to be done to adapt the curriculum well enough to meet the needs of more able pupils, including those who are particularly gifted and talented.

A wide variety of experiences such as residential trips to Swanage and Wales or visits to the local library and church help bring learning alive. Events such as art and book weeks, sports competitions and music concerts add variety and interest. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs. These sports, drama and arts activities develop their skills well.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school includes those with learning difficulties and disabilities very well. Detailed planning and skilled support by a talented and knowledgeable staff team help secure their good progress. Specialist staff and agencies work alongside teaching staff to provide high quality care and support. For example, the school has its own pupil welfare officer who is much appreciated by the pupils who say 'There is always someone you can talk to.' This listening ear has been particularly effective for vulnerable pupils who have experienced difficult events. Pupils and their families are also helped by the school's excellent counselling system. The school encourages the involvement of parents well.

Pastoral guidance for all pupils is excellent. The school tracks the progress of different groups carefully and all groups achieve well. Academic guidance is provided through helpful marking and targets which are shared with pupils and parents. In some classes, regular discussion of these targets enables pupils to see their own progress. As they say, this 'pushes you so that you get better'. Guidance for pupils who are particularly able, gifted and talented, does not yet match the quality of guidance provided to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leadership and management are a strength of the school. The way that the school evaluates itself is outstanding and has had a significant impact on the quality of education the school provides. During the last two years, governors and staff have developed and improved the use of assessment which is now being used as a model by the local authority. The quality of care and support has been similarly enhanced and is now first rate. The leadership and organisation of staff within teams has led to greater consistency in pupils' progress and successful innovation as, for example, in the Foundation Stage. Alongside this, knowledgeable curriculum leaders have developed teachers' expertise in particular subjects. The excellent leadership and management skills of the headteacher have been recognised through his part-time secondment to the local authority.

The governors, headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff work very well together as a united team to ensure that pupils make good progress and strive to reach their potential. Governors have ensured that challenging targets have been set and largely met. First class systems for school administration have meant that improvements to teaching and learning have been accompanied by enhanced facilities and support for pupils.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

1 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Francis Baily Primary School, Thatcham, RG19 4GG

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school recently. Before we came, we read in the prospectus that you have written that you think Francis Baily is 'a kind, friendly school where you will have fun as you learn'. We agree with you and judged that your school is good overall with some real strengths. One of the best things is the way the school cares for and looks after you. Many of you, and your parents, told us that there is always someone to help you. We could see this, both in your classrooms and talking to the adults around the school. We were also pleased to hear about all the things you do to help each other such as being school councillors and play partners or when you are 'twinned' with other classes. Francis Baily is a big school but you and all the adults make sure everyone feels they have a friend to help them if they need it.

Although in the past, some of you did not make quite as good progress every year as your teachers would have liked, we can see that this is now much improved. Part of this is because your teachers are tracking your progress so well. Watching your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you and your teachers we could see that most of you make good progress to reach standards which are higher than in many other schools.

Your teachers and governors would like your school to be even better than it is. They share their ideas about this very well and listen to what you tell them in the surveys you complete. Like your teachers, we think that sometimes you could make even better progress if you were challenged to work more independently. This already works very well in the foundation stage classes. The school is very good at helping you when you are struggling or find things difficult. They need now to be just as good in challenging you when you are really good at something. Your teachers have already got plans for this, so you can look forward to even more exciting opportunities to learn. We are sure you will enjoy them.

With best wishes,

Nicola Davies

Lead inspector